CHAPTER I.

In Which I Whet My Father's Sword. The summer day was all but spent when Richard Jennifer, riding express, brought me Captain Falconnet's challenge.

'Twas a dayfall to be marked with a white stone, even in our Carolina calendar. The sun, reaching down to the mountain-girt horizon in the west, filled all the upper air with the glory of its departing, and the higher leaf plumes of the great maples be-fore my cabin door wrought lustrous patterns in gilded green upon a zenith back-ground of turquoise shot with crimson, like the figurings of some rich old tapestries I had once seen in my Field Marshal's castle in the Mark of Moravia.

Beyond the maples a brook tinkled and plashed over the stones on its way to the

plashed over the stones on its way to the bear-by Catawba; and its peaceful brawling, and the evensong of a pair of clear-throated warblers poised on the topmost twigs of one of the trees, should have been sweet music in the ears of a returned exlic. But on that matchless bride's-month evening of dainty sunset arabesques and brook and bird songs I was in little humor for rejoic-ing.

The road made for the river lower down The road made for the river lower down and followed its windings up the valley; but Jennifer came by the Indian trace through the forest. I can see him now as he rode beneath the mapies, bending to the saddle-horn where the branches hung lowest; a preity figure of a handsome young provincial, clad in fashions three years behind those I had seen in London the winter last past. He rode gentlemanwise, in small mothes of rough gray woolen and with stout leggings over his hose; but he wore he cocked hat atilt like a trooper's, and hs cocked hat atilt like a trooper's, and the sword on his thigh was a good service blade and no mere hilt and scabbard for show such as our courtier macaronis were just then beginning to affect.

Now I had known this handsome young-pier when he was but a little lad; had rught him how to bend the Indian bow and pose the reed-shaft arrow in those happer tays before the tyrant Governor Tryon turned hangman and the battle of the Great turned hangman and the battle of the Great IAlamance had left me fatherless. More-over, I had drunk a cup of wine with him at the Mecklenburg Arms no longer ago than yesterweek—this to a renewal of our early friendship. Hence, I must needs be somewhat taken aback when he drew rein at my door-stone, doffed his hat with a sweeping bow worthy a courtier of the great Louis, and said, after the best manner of Eir Charles Grandison: Sir Charles Grandison:

"I have the honor of addressing Captain John Ireton, sometime of his Majesty's Royal Scots Blues and late of her Apostolic Majesty's Twenty-ninth Regiment of Hus

It was but an euphulsm of the time, this formal preamble, declaring that his errand had to do with the preliminaries of a private quarrel between gentlemen. Yet I pould scarce restrain a smile. For these upcroppings of courtier etiquette have ever seemed to march but mineingly with the tree stride of our western beckwards. free stride of our western backwoods. None the less, you are to suppose that I made whift to match his bow in some fashion, and

whilt to match his bow in some fashion, and to say: "At your service, sir."

Whereupon he bowed again, clapped hat to head and tendered me a sealed packet.
"From Sir Francis Falconnet, Knight Bachelor of Beaumaris, volunteer Captain in his Majesty's German Legion," he announced, with stern dignity.

Having no second to refer him to, I broke

fight me fair; that he would not com. pel me to kill him as one kills a wild beast at bay. For certainly I should have killed him in any event: so much I had promised my poor Dick Coverdale on that dismal November morning when he had choked out his life in my arms, the victim first of this man's treachery, and, at the last, of his sword. So, as I say, I was nothing loath, and yet I would not seem too ages?

nd yet I would not seem too eager.
"I might say that I have no unsettled quarrel with Captain Falconnet," I de-murred, when I had read the challenge. "He spoke slightingly of a lady, and I did

"Your answer, Captain Ireton!" quoth my youngster, curtly. "I am not empowered to give or take in the matter of accommo-

"Not so fast, if you please," I rejoined. "Not so fast, if you please," I rejoined.
"I have no wish to disappoint your principal, or his master, the devil. Let it be tomorrow morning at sunrise in the cak grove
which was once my father's wood field, each
man with his own blade. And I give you
fair warning, Master Jennifer: I shall kill
your bullyragging Captain of light horse as
I would a vermin of any other breed."

At this Jennifer flunc himself from his

At this Jennifer flung himself from his saddle with a great laugh. "If you can," he qualified. "But enough

"If you can," he qualified. "But enough of these by your leave, sirs." I am near famished, and as dry as King David's bottle in the smoke. Will you give me bite and sup before I mount and ride again? "Tis a long sallop back to town on an empty stomach and with a guilet as dry as Mr. Gilbert Stair's wit."

Here was my fresh hearted Dick Jennifer. Here was my fresh-hearted Dick Jennifer

Here was my fresh-hearted Dick Jennifer back again all in a breath; and I made haste to shout for Darius, and for Tomas to take his horse, and otherwise to bestir myself to do the honors of my poor forest fastness as well as I might.

Luckily, my haphazard larder was not quite empty, and there were presently a bit of cold deer's meat and some cakes of maize bread baked in the ashes set before the guest. Also there was a cup of sweet

maire bread baked in the ashes set before the guest. Also there was a cup of sweet wine, home-pressed from the berries of the Indian scuppernong, to wash them down. And afterward, though the evening was no more than mountain-breeze cool, we had a handful of fire on the hearth for the cheer of it while we smoked our reed-stem

It was over the pipes that Jennifer unbur of the gossip of the day in

Queensborough.
"Have you heard the newest? But I know you haven't, since the post-riders came only this morning. The war has shifted from the north in good earnest at last, and we are like to have a taste of the harryings are like to have a taste of the harryings the Jerseymen have had since 76. My Lord Cornwallis is come as far as Camden, they say; and Colonel Tarleton has crossed the

"So? Then Mr. Rutherford is like to have his work cut out for him. I take it."

Jennifer eyed me curiously. "Grif Rutherford is a stout Indian fighter; no West Carolinian will gainsay that. But he is never the man to match Cornwallia. We'll have help from the north."

"De Kalb?" I suggested.

Again the curious eyeshot. "Nay, John Ireton, you need not fear me, though I am just now this redcoat Captain's next friend.

"You know more about the Baron de Kalb's doings than anybody else in Mecklenburg." So? Then Mr. Rutherford is like to have

burg."
"I? Why should I know?"

"You know a deal-or else the gossips lie most recklessly."
"They do lie if they connect me with the Baron de Kalb, or with any other of the patriot side. What are they saying?"
"That you come straight from the Baron's camp in Virginia—to see what you can

"A spy, eh? 'Tis cut out of whole cloth, Dick, my lad. I've never took the outh on

Dick my ind. I've never took the oath on either side."

He looked vastly disappointed. "But you will, Jack? Surely, you have not to think twice in such a cause?"

"As between King and Congress, you mean? "Tis no quarrel of mine."

"Now God save us, John Ireton!" he burst sut in a fine farvor of youthful enthusiasm that made him all the handsomer. "I had.

never thought to hear your father's son say | with an oath and flung his pipe into the fire.

I shrugged.
"And why not, pray? The King's minion.
Tryon, hanged my father and gave his
estate to his minion's minion, Gilbert Stair. estate to his minion's minion, Gilbert Stat.

So, in spite of your declaration and your confiscations and your laws against allen landholders. I come back to find myself still the son of the outlawed Roger Ireton, and this same Gilbert Stair firmly lodged in my father's seat."

Jennifer shrugged in his turn.

"Gilbert Stair, sweet Madge's sake

Jennifer shrugged in his turn.
"Gilbert Stair-for, sweet Madge's sake
I'm loath to say it-Gilbert Stair blows
hot or cold as the wind sets fair
or stormy. And I will say this for
him; no other Tryon legatee of the mall has steered so fine a course through these last five upsetting years. How he trims so skil-fully no man knows. A short month since, he had General Rutherford and Colonel Sumter as guests at Appleby Hundred; now tt is Sir Francis Falconnet and the British light-horse officers who are honored. But let him rest; the cause of independence is bigger than any man, or any man's private

quarrel, friend John; and I had hoped—"
I laid a hand on his knee "Spare yourself, Dick. My business in Queensborough
was to learn how best I might reach Mr. Rutherford's rendezvous." For a moment he sat, pipe in air, staring at me as if to make sure that he had heard aright. Then he clipt my hand and wrung aright. it, babbling out some boyish brava that I

it, babbling out some boyish brava that I made haste to put an end to.
"Softly, my lad." I said. "tis no great thing the Congress will gain by my adhesion. But you, Richard, how comes it that I find you taking your ease at Jennifer House and hobnobbing with his Majesty's officers when the cause you love is still in such desperate straits."

He blushed like a girl at that, and for a little greate call, nuffer the harder at his

little space only puffed the harder at his

"I did go out with the Minute Men in '76, if you must know, and smelt powder at Moore's Creek. When my time was done I would have listed again; but just at that my father died and the Jennifer acres were like to go to the dogs, lacking oversight. So I came home and-and-

He stopped in some embarrassment, and I thought to help him on.
"Nay, out with it, Dick. If I am not thy father, I am near old enough to stand in his stead. 'Twas more than husbandry that rusted the sword in its scabbard, I'll be bound."
"You are right look: 'twas both more

"You are right, Jack; 'twas both more "You are right, Jack; 'twas both more and less," he confessed, shamefacedly.
"Twas this same Margery Stair. As I have said, her father blows hot or cold as the wind sets, but not she. She is the flercest little Tory in the two Carolinas, bar none. When I had got Jenniter in order and began to talk of 'listing again, she flew into a pretty rage and stamped her foot and all but swore that Dick Jenniter in buff and blue should never look upon her in buff and blue should never look upon her

I had a glimpse of Jennifer the lover as he spoke, and the sight went somewhat on the way toward casting out the devil of sullen rage that had possessed me since first I had set returning foot in this my native homeland. Twas a life lacking naught of hardness, but much of human whereupon he bowed again, clapped hat be head and tendered me a scaled packet.

"From Sir Francis Falconnet, Knight Bachelor of Beaumaris, volunteer Captain in his Majesty's German Legion," he announced, with stern dignity.

Having no second to refer him to, I broke the scal of the cartel myself. Since my gnemy had seen fit to come thus far on the way to his end in some gentlemanly manner, it was not for me to find difficulties among the formalities. In good truth, I was overjoyed to be thus assured that he would fight me fair; that he would not composed to the fair; that he would not compose the fair that it have dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder, then, if I set this frank-faced Richard in the barren life was dead. What wonder the barren life was dead. What wonder the barren life was dead. What wonder the barren life was dead mellowing, that iny behind the home-com

"Aye, and have ever since she was in pinafores and I a hobbledehoy in Master Wytheby's school." "So long? I thought Mr. Stair was a later comer in Mecklenburg." "He came eight years ago, as one of

Tryon's underlings. Madge was even then motherless; the same little willful prat-apace she has ever been. I would you knew her, Jack. 'Twould make this shiftiness of mine seem less the thing it is."
"So you have stayed at home a-courting

while others fought to give you leisure." said I, thinking to rally him. But he took it harder than I meant.
"Tis just that, Jack; and I am fair

ashamed. While the fighting kept to the North it did not grind so keen; but now, with the redcoats at our doors, and the Tories sacking and burning in every settly 'tis enough to flay an honest man God-a-mercy, Jack! I'll go; I've got to go, or die of shame!"

He sat silent after that, and as there seemed nothing that a curt old campaigner could say at such a pass, I bore him com-By and by he harked back to the matter

of his errand, making some apology for his coming to me as the Baronet's second: ""Twas none of my free offering, you may be sure," he added. "But it so happened that Captain Falconnet once did me a like turn. I had chanced to run afoul of that Captain of Hessian pigs, Lauswoulter, at cards, and Falconnet stood my friend-though now I bethink me, he did seem over

anxious that one or the other of us should be killed."
"As how?" I inquired.
"When Lauswoulter slipped and I might have spitted him, and didn't, Falconnet was for having us make the duel a outrance. But that's beside the mark. Having served

me then, he makes the point that I shall serve him now."
"'Tis a common courtesy, and you could not well refuse. I love you none the less for paying your debts; even to such a vil-lain as this volunteer Captain."
"True, 'tis a debt, as you say; but I like

little enough the manner of its paying. How came you to quarrel with him, Jack?" Now even so blunt a seldler as I have ever been may have some prickings of delicacy where the truth might breed gossip-gossip about a tale which I had said should gossip about a tale which I had said should die with Richard Coverdale and be buried in his grave. So I evaded the question, ciumsily enough, as has ever been my hap in fencing with words. "The cause was not wanting. If any ask,

you may may he trod upon my foot in pass Jennifer laughed.

"And for that you struck him? Heavens, man! you hold your life carelessly. Do you happen to know that this volunteer Captain of light horse is accounted the best blade in

"Who should know that better than—" I was fairly on the brink of betraying the true cause of quarrel, but drew rein in time. "I care not if he were the best in the army.

I have crossed steel before—and with a good swordsman now and then."
"Anan?" said Jennifer, as one who makes no doubt. And then: "But this toe-pinching story is but a dry crust to offer a friend. You spoke of a lady; who was she? Or was that only another way of telling me to mind my own affairs?"

to mind my own affairs?" "Oh, as to that, the lady was real enough, and Falconnet did grossly asperse her. But I know not who she is, nor aught about her, save that she is sweet and fair and good to

"Young?"
"Aye."
"And you say you do not know her? Let
me see her through your eyes and mayhap
I can name her for you."
"That I cannot. Mr. Peale's best skill
"That I cannot. Mr. Peale's hest skill

"And you say you do not know her? Let me see her through your eyes and mayhap I can name her for you."

"That I cannot. Mr. Peale's best skill would be none too great for the painting of any picture that should do her justice. But she is small, with the airs and graces of a lady of the quality; also, she has witching blue eyes, and hair that has the glint of summer sunshine in it. Also, she sits a horse as if bred to the saddle."

To my amaxement, Jennifer leaped up

At the question of my own sorry teen years before once more upon the soil of my native Carolina was still another year.

What I found upon landing at New Berne and saw while riding a jog trot thence to the Catawba was a Province rent and torn by partisan warfare. Though I came not once upon the partisans themselves in all that long faring, there were trampled fields and pillaged houses enough to serve as milestones; and in my native Mecklenburg a were but the o impulsive heart

"Curse him!" he cried. "And he dared lay a foul tongue to her, you say? Tell me what he said! I have a good right to

I shook my head. "Nay, Richard; I may not repeat it to you, since you are the man's second. Truly, there is more than this at the back of our quarrel; but of itself it was enough, and more than enough, inasmuch as the lady had just done him the honor to recognize him."
"His words—his very words, Jack if you

love me!"

"No; the quarrel is mine."
"L. God! it is not yours!" he stormed, raging back and forth before the fire. "What is Margery Stair to you, Jack Ireton?" I smiled, beginning now to see some peep-

hole in this milistone of mystery.
"Margery Stair? She is no more than a name to me, I do assure you; the daughter of the man who sits in my father's seat at Appleby Hundred."

"But you are going to fight for her!" he

"Am I? I pledge you my word I did not know it. But in any case I should fight Sir Francis Falconnet; aye, and do my best to kill him, too. Sit you down and fill an-other pipe. Whatever the quarrel, it is "Mayhap; but it is mine, too," he broke

"Maynap; but it is mine.
in, angrily. "At all events, I'll see this
King's volunteer well hanged before I second him in such a cause." "That as you choose. But you are bound in honor, are you not?"

an anone, are you not?"

As you have guessed, I was Coverdale's next friend and second in this affair, and but for the upsetting news of the Tryon tyranny in Carolina—news which reached me on the very day of the meeting—I should there and then have called the slayer to his account. How my father, who, Presbyterian and Ireton though he was, had always been of the King's side, came to espouse the cause of the "Regulators," as they called them-selves. I know not. In my youthful memo-

mine full charged, with slow-match well

alight for its firing.

Charleston had fallen, and Colonel Tarleton's outposts were already widespread on the upper waters of the Broad and the Catawba. Thus it was that the first sight which greeted my eyes when I rode into Queensborough was the familiar trappings of my old service, and I was made to know that in spite of Mr. Jefferson's boldly writthat in spite of Mr. Jenerson's boldly writ-ten Declaration of Independence, and that earlier casting of the King's yoke by the patriotic Mecklenburgers themselves, my boyhood home was for the moment by sword-right a part of his Majesty's Province of North Carolina. You are not to suppose that these things moved me greatly. As yet I was chiefly

moved me greatly. As yet I was chiefly concerned with my own affair and anxious to learn at first hands the cost to me of my father's connection with the Regulators. Touching this, I was not long kept in ig-norance. Of all the vast demesne of Apple-by Hundred there was no roof to shelter the son of the outlawed Roger Ireton save that of this poor hunting lodge in the mighty forest of the Catawba, overlooked, with the few runaway blacks inhabiting it, in the intaking of an estate so large that I think not even my father knew all the metes and bounds of it. I shall not soon forget the interview with

the lawyer, in which I was told the inhospitable truth. Nor shall I forget his trucu-lent leer when he hinted that I had best be gone out of these parts, since it was not yet too late to bring down the sentence of outlawry from the father to the son.

It was well for him that I knew not at the time that he was Gilbert Stair's factor. For I was mad enough to have throttled him where he sat at his writing table, matching his long fingers and smirking at me with his evil smile. But of this man more in his time and place. His name was Owen Pengarvin, I would have you remem-

For a week and a day I lingered on at Queensborough, for what I knew not, save that all the world seemed suddenly to have

Stair outlands, and we'll fare on together." After this he would brook no more delay, and when Tomas had fetched his horse I saw him mount and ride away under the low-hanging maples-watched him fairly

out of sight in the green and gold twilight of the great forest before turning back to my lonely hearth and its somber reminders. I stirred the dying embers, throwing on a pine knot for better light. Then I took down my father's sword from its deer-horn brackets over the chimney-piece and set myself to fine its edge and point with a bit of Scotch whinstone. It was a good blade, a true old Andrea Ferara got in battle in the Seventeenth Century by one of the Nottingham Iretons.

I whetted it well and carefully. It was not that I feared my enemy's strength of wist or tricks of fence, but fighting had been my trade, and he is but a poor craftsman who looks not well to see that his tools are in order against their time of using.

CHAPTER II. Which Knits Up Some Broken Ends. It was in the autumn of the year '64, as I was coming of ago, that my father made ready to send me to England. Himself a conscience exile from Episcopal Virginia and a descendant of those Nottingham Iretons whose best-known son fought stoutly against church and King under Oliver Cromwell, he was yet willing to humor my bent and to use the interest of my mother's family to enter me in the King's service. Accordingly, I took ship at Norfolk for "home," as we called it in those days; and, after a stormy passage and overmuch waiting as my cousins' guest in Lincoin-shire, had my pair of colors in the Scots Blues, lately home from garrison duty in

Of the life in barracks of a young ensign of the "Regulators," as they called them-selves. I know not. In my youthful memo-ries of him he figures as the feudal lord of be minded to go back to my old Field Mar-for him, the less said the better. But of

a good father's example, and some small heritage of Puritan decency come down to me from the sound-hearted old Roundhead

stock, I won out of that devil's sponging-

house, an army in the time of peace, with

had to theirs.

somewhat less to my score than others

It was in this barrack life that I came to

know Richard Coverdale and his evil gen-ius, the man Francis Falconnet Coverdale was an ensign in my own regiment, and we were sworn friends from the first. His was a clean soul and a brave; and it was to him that I owed escape from many of the grosser chargings on that score above

asmed.

As for Falconnet, he was even then a ruffler and a buily, though he was not of the army. He was a younger son, and at that time there were two lives between him and the baronetcy; but with a mother's bequeathings to purchase idleness and to gild his iniquities, he was a fair example of the jeunesse doree of that England; a libertine a gamester, a rakehell; brave as the tiger is brave, and to the full as pittless. He was a boon companion of the of-

as I believe, backed by surely rancor or conscious irreverence.

"That you shall not, Jack," he asserted, stoutly. "I must be a gallop now to tell this King's Captain to look elsewhere for his next friend; but to-morrow morning I'll meet you in the road between this and the Stair outlands, and we'll fare on learther."

"I must be a gallop now to tell this sword, and, more precious than this, a message from the dead. My father's farewell was written upon a leaf torn from his journal, and was but a hasty scrawl. I here

"Stair outlands and we'll fare on learther."

"So?" queried Jennifer. "Then this is not transcribe it.

> My Son-I know not if this will e My Son-I know not if this will ever come into your hands, but it and my sword shall be left in trust with the faithful Dariue. We have made our ill-timed cast for liberty and it has failed, and to-morrow I and five others are to die at the rope's end. I bequeath you my sword-'tis all the tyrant hath left me to decise and my blessing to go with it when you, or another Ireton, shall once more bare the true old blade in the sacred cause of liberty. Thy father, ROGER IRETON

ROGER IRETON. You may be sure I conned these few brave words till I had them well by heart; and later, when my voice was surer and my eyes less dim, I summoned Darius and bade him tell me all he knew. And it was thus I learned what I have here set down of my

father's end.

The next day, all indecision gone, I rode to Queensborough to ascertain, if so I might, how best to throw the weight of the good old Andrea into the patriot scale, meaning to push on thence to Charlotte when I had got the bearings of the nearest

patriot force.
'Twas none so easy to learn what I needed Twas none so easy to learn what I needed to know; though, now I sought for information, a curious thing or two developed. One was that this light-horse outpost in our hamlet was far in advance of the army of invasion-so far that it was dangersomely isolated, and beyond support. Another was the air of secrecy maintained, and the holding of the troop in instant readiness for fight or flight. Why this little handful of British regu-

lars should stick and hang so far from Lord Cornwallis's main, which was then well down upon the Wateree, I could not guess. But for the secrecy and vigilance

"Then make him challenge you and lars should stick and hang so far from guess. But for the secrecy and vigilance there were good reasons and sufficient. The patriot militia had been called out, and was embodying under General Rutherford but a at that, I fear. I have heard he can clip a

embodying under General Rutherford but a few miles distant near Charlotte.

I had this information in guarded whispers from mine host of the tavern, and was but a moment free of the taproom, when I first saw Margery Stair and so drank of the cup of trembling of felled trees barring the way. Jennifer madness in its less. She was riding, unmarked, down the high road, not on a pillion as most women rode in that day, "Ware the wood!" he said sharply, and none too soon, for even as he snoke the masked, down the high road, not on a pillion as most women rode in that day, but upon her own mount with a black groom two lengths in the rear. I can ploture her for you no better than I could for Richard Jennifer; but this I know, that even this first sight of her moved me strangely, though the witching beauty of her face and the proudness of it were more a challenge than a beckoning.

A blade's length at my right where I was standing in front of the tavern, three red-coat officers lounged at ease; and to one of them my lady tossed a nod of recognition, half laughing, half defiant. I turned quickly to look at the favored one. He stood

I blatch is their cases as he drew rein.

"Ware the wood!" he said sharply, and none too soon, for even as he spoke the glade at our left filled as by magic with a motley troop deploying into the road as to surround us.

"Now, who are these?" I asked; "friends or foes?"

"Foes who will hang you in your own halter strap; Jan Howart's Tories—the same fortught since. Will your horse take that burned the Westcotts in their cases as he drew rein.

"Name the wood!" he said sharply, and none too soon, for even as he spoke the glade at our left filled as by magic with a more loop deploying into the road as to surround us.

"Now, who are these?" I asked; "friends or foes?"

"Foes who will hang you in your own halter strap; Jan Howart's Tories—the same fortught since, Will your horse take that burned the Westcotts in their cases as he drew rein.

harricade, think you?"

"Aye—standing, if need be."

"Aye—standing, if need be."

"Aye—standing, if need be."

"Then at them, in God's name. Charge!"

It needed but the word and we were in the thick of it. I remembered my old field marshal's maxim, Von Feinden umringht, ist die Zeit zu zerschmettern; and truly, being so plentifully outnumbered, we did strike both first and hard.

Something half familier to the standard of the service of

page here for you.

"Oh, come, hir Frank! that's too bad?"

cried the younger of the twain; and then I took two strides to front him fairly.

"Sir Francis Falconnet, you are a foultook two strides to front him fairly.

"Sir Francis Falconnet, you are a foul-lipped blackguard!" I said; and, lest that should not be enough, I smote him in the face, so that he fell like an ox in the

CHAPTER III.

In Which My Enemy Scores First. True to his promise, Richard Jennifer me me in the cool gray birthlight of the new day at a turn in the river road not above a mile or two from the rendezvous, and thence

we jogged on together. After the greetings, which, as you may like to know, were grateful enough on my part, I would fain inquire how the baronet had taken his second's defection; but of this Jennifer would say little. He had broken with his principal, whether in anger or not I could only guess; and one of Faiconnet's brother omcers, that younger of the twain wao had cried shame at the Baronet's vile

boast, was to serve in his stead. It was such a dayuawn as I have some times seen in the Carpathans; cool and clear, but with that sweet dewy wetness in the lower air which washes the over night conwens from the brain, and is noth meat and drink to one who breatnes it. On one left the road was overhung by the bordering rorest, and where the pranches drooped lowest we brushed the fragrance from the wile-grape bloom in passing. Or the right the river, late in nood, eddled sortly; and sounds other than the murmur-ing or the waters, the match songs of the birds, and the dust-murried hoor-peats of our norses there were none. Peace, deep and abiding, was the key-note of nature's morning hymn; and in all this sylvan byway there was naught remindful of the force internecine warrare aftame in all the countryside. Some rough forging of this

"Old Momer Nature ruffles her feathers little enough for any teapot tempest of ours," he said. "But speaking of the cruelties, we provincial savages, as my Lord Cornwallis calls us, have no monopoly. The post-riders from the South bring blood-curding stories of Colonel Tarieton's do-ings. 'Tis said he overtook some of Mr. Lincoin's re-enforcements came too late. They gave battle but faintheartedly, being all unready for an enemy, and presently threw down their arms and begged for quarter-begged and were cut down as they

"Faugh!" said I. "That is but hangman's work. And yet in London I heard that this same Colonel Tarlston was with Lord Howe in Philadelphia and was made much of by the ladies.

Jennifer's laugh was neither mirthful por "'Tis a weakness of the sex," he scoffed.

"The women have a fondness for a ma with a dash of the brute in him." I laughed also, but without bitterness, "You say it feelingly. Do you speak by "Aye, that I do. Now here is my lady

the tiger is brave, and to the full as pitiless. He was a boon companion of the officers' mess; and for a time—and purpose—
posed as Coverdale's friend, and mine.
Since I would not tell my poor Dick's
story to Richard Jennifer, I may not set
it down in cold words here for you. It was
the age-old tragic comedy of a false friend's
treachery and a woman's weakness; a duel,
and the wrong man slain. And you may
know this; that Falconnet's most merciful
role in it was the part he played on chill
November morning when he put Richard
Coverdale to the wall and ran him through,
est lodge a refuge. He had been my father's
body-servant, and, notwithstanding all the
vears that lay between, he knew me at once.
Thereupon, as you would guess, I came though I would have seconded him at a pinch, is but a rattern of his brutal Colonel."

I put two and two together.
"So Falconnet is on terms at Appleby
Hundred, is he?"
"Oh sure!"

"Oh, surely. Gilbert Stair keeps open house for any and all of the winning hand,

your first knowing of him?"

"No." So much I said and no more. We rode on in silence for a little space. and then my youthling must needs break out again in fresh beseechings.

"Tell me what you know of him, and what it was he said of Madge," he entreated. "You can't deny me now. Jack."

"I can and shall. It matters not to you or to any what he is or has been."

"Why?" "Because, as God gives me strength and skill, I shall presently run him through, and so his account will be squared once for all with all men-and all women, as well."
"God speed you." quoth my loyal ally. "I knew not your quarrel with him was so bitter."

"It is to the death."
"So it seems. In that case, if by any accident he—" I divined what he would say and broke in

upon him.
"Nay, Dick; if he thrusts me must not take up my quarrel. I know not where you learned to twirl the steel, or how, but you may be sure he would splt you like a trussed fowl in the first bout. I have seen him kill a man who was reckoned the best short sword in my old regiment of

the best short sword in my old regiment of the Blues."
"Content yourself," said my young Hot-spur, grandly. "If you spare him he shall answer to me for that thing he said of Madge Stair: this though I know not what It was he said."

I smiled at his fuming ardor, and gian-

settling his hat was bejeweled—overmuch bejeweled, to my taste.

Something half familiar in the figure of him made me look again. In the act he turned, and then I saw his face—saw and recognized it, though nine years lay between this and my last seeing of it across the body of Richard Coverdale.

"So!" thought I. "My time has come at last." And while I was yet turning over in my mind now best to balt him, the lady passed out of earshot, and I heard him say to the two, his comrades, that foul thing which I would not repeat to Jennifer; a vile boast with which I may not soil my midst of it want with the last, and in the midst of it want with the last of the midst of it want with the last of the midst of it want with the last of the midst of it want with the last of the midst of it want with the last of midst of it went night to death because he midst of it went night to death because he held his hand to watch a cut and double thrust of mine.

"Over with you!" I shouted, pricking the

"Over with you!" I shouted, pricking the man who would have mowed him down with a great soythe handled as a sword.

Our horses took the barrier in a flying leap, straining themselves for the race beyond. When we had pulled them down to a foot pace we were safely out of rifle shot and there was space to count the cost. Copyright, 1904, by Bowsen-Merrill Co.

There was no cost worth counting. A saddlehorn bullet-shattered for me, and the back of Jennifer's sword hand scored lightly across by another of the random missiles.

ly across by another of the random missiles summed up our woundings. Dick whipped out his kerchief to twist about the scored hand, while I glanced back to see if any Tory cared to follow. "Lord, Jack! I owe you one to keep and

"Lord, Jack! I owe you one to keep and one to pay back," quoth my youngster, warmly. "I never saw a swordsman till this day."

"Mere tricks, Dick, my lad; I have had fifteen years in which to learn them. And these were but country yokels armed with farming tools. The two with swords had little wit to use them."

"Oh, come!" said he. "I know a pretty bit of swordplay when I see it. If we come whole out of this adventure with the baronet you shall teach me some of these 'mere tricks' of

teach me some of these 'mere tricks'

yours."

I promised, glancing back toward the dust-veiled barrier in the distance.
"Dick, you passed this way an hour ago; was that breastwork in the road then?"
"Not a stick of it."
"Then we may are say our volunteer Captain fights unwillingly."
"How so?" he demanded, being much too straightforward himself to suspect duplicity in others.

straightforward himself to suspect duplicity in others.

""Tis plain enough. This was a trap meant to stop or delay us, and I'll wager high it was the baronet who set and baited it. It would please him well to be able to say what our failure to come would give him warrant for. Let us gallop a bit, lest we be late and so play into his hand."

Jennifer smiled grimly and gave his horse the rein. "I think you'd charge the fall of man to him if that would give you better leave to kill him. I'd hate to own you for my enemy, John Ireton."

my enemy, John Ireton."

For all our swift speeding we were yet a

the rendezvous under the tail

little late at the rendezvous under the tall oaks. When we came on the ground the baronet was walking up and down arm in arm with his second, a broad-shouldered young Briton, fair of skin and ruddy of face. If Falconnet had set the Tory trap for

us he veiled his disappointment at its fail-ure. His face, dark and inscrutable as it always was, was made more sinister by the plasters knitting up his broken cheek, but I was right glad to make sure that my blow had spared his eyes. Richly as he deserved his fate, I thought it would be ill to think on afterward that I had had him at a disadvantage of my own making.

There was little time wasted in the material of the control of the control

There was little time wasted in the pre-There was little time wasted in the pre-liminaries. When Falconnet saw us he dropped his second's arm and began to make ready. I gave my sword to Jennifer and the seconds went apart together. There was some measuring and balancing of weapons, and then Richard came back. "The Baronet's sword is a good inch longer than yours in the blade, and is some-what heavier. Tybee has brought a pair of French short swords, which he offers. Will

French short swords, which he offers. Will you change your terms?"
"No; I am content to fight with my own

weapon."

Jennifer nodded, "So I told him." Jennier noded. "So I told him." And then: "There was no surgeon to be had in town, Doctor Carew having gone with the Minute Men to join Mr. Rutherford. Typse says 'tis scarce in accordance with the later rulings to fight without one."

"To the devil with their hairsplittings!" said I, "Let us have done with them and he at til."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"Sir Francis Falconnet, you are a blackguard?" I said, and then I took two strides to front him fairly.

his own domain, more absolute than many | shal and the keeping of the Turkish bor- | this you may like to know that, what with of the petty kinglings I came afterwards to know in the German marches. But this, too, I remember; that while his rule at Appleby Hundred was stern and despotic enough, he was every ready to lead a willing ear to any tale of oppression. And if what men say of the tyrant Tryou's tax-gatherers and law-court robbers be no more than half truth, there was need for any honest gentleman to oppose them.

What that opposition came to in 'Il is now a tale twice told. Taken in arms against the Governor's authority, and with an establishment of the cabin, so lightly touched by time that the mere sight of it carried me

the Governor's authority, and with an estate well worth receiving, my father had little justice and less mercy accorded him. With many others he was outlawed; his estate. tates were declared forfeit; and a few days later he, with Benjamin Merrill and four more captivated at the Alamance, was giv-

en some farce of a trial and hanged.

When the news of this came to me you may well suppose that I had no heart to continue in the service of the King who ould sanction and reward such villainies as these of the butcher William Tryon. So I the Blues, took samp for the Continent, and, after wearing some half dozen different uni-forms in Germany, was lucky enough to come at length to serviceable blows under my old Field Marshal on the Turkish

frontier.

To you of a younger generation, born in the day of swift mail coaches and well-kept post roads, the slowness with which our laggard news traveled in the elder time must needs seem past belief. It was early in the year '19 before I began to hear more than vague camp-fire tales of the struggle going on between the colonies and the moth-

of the petty kinglings I came afterwards | der; the next I would ride over some part of

enanced upon the bridle path that led to our old hunting lodge in the forest depths.

Tracing the path to its end among the maples I found the cabin, so lightly touched by the father and I had stalked the white-tailed this called in the bill gladge beyond, with this logdeer in the hill glades beyond, with this log-built cabin for a res' camp. I spurred up under the low-hanging trees. The door stood wide, and a thin wreath of blue smoke curied upward from the mouth of the

wattled chimney. Then and there I had my first weld home. Old black Darius—old when I had last seen him at Appleby Hundred, and a very grandsire of ancients now-was one runaways who made the for-He filled a fresh pipe, lighted it with a coal from the hearth and puffed away in silence for a time. When he spoke again it was not as Falconnet's next friend, "What you have told me puts a new face on the matter, Jack. Sir Francis may find him another second where he can. If he has aught to say, I shall tell him plain he lied to me about the quarrel, as he did. Now who is there to see fair play on your side, John Ireton?" At the question an overwhelming se

of my own sorry case grappled me. Fif-teen years before, I had left Appleby Hun-dred and my native province as well be-friended as the son of Roger Ireton was sure to be. And now— "Dick, my lad, I am like to fight alone,"

He swore egain at that; and here, lest I

should draw my loyal Richard as he was not, let me say, once for all, that his oaths were but the o ushings of a warm and impulsive heart by bitter, and never,

Thereupon, as you would guess, I came immediately into some small portion of my kingdom. Though Darius was the patriarch, the other blacks were also fugitives from Appleby Hundred; and for the son of Roger Ireton there was instant vassalage and loyal service. But best of all, on my first evening before the handful of fire in the great

as I told you."

The thought of this unspoiled young maiden having aught to do with such a thrice-accursed despoiler of women made

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